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ABSTRACT

This paper examines how collaborative partnership roles are defined in an educational community. The central research question is: in situations where reading instruction is presented through a literature-based approach and library instruction is supported through a resource-based approach, how is the teacher-librarian partnership enacted in a technology-driven learning environment? It is based on a 2-year, field research-based extension of the author's original anchor study. The extension adds definition to the individual roles within the partnership and argues for the benefits resulting from current technology-driven learning environments. From analyses of field notes, artifacts and interviews, three theoretical constructs are presented: (1) to develop a collaborative partnership, the partners must be willing to support and maintain the relationship; (2) For a collaborative partnership to survive, evidence of interwoven curricula must be present; and (3) technology-driven learning adds definition to resource-based instruction. (RS)

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Developing a Teacher-Librarian Partnership in a Literature-Based Approach.

by Joanna R. Jones

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Developing a Teacher-Librarian Partnership in a Literature-Based Approach

Abstract:

This session examines how collaborative partnership roles are defined in an educational community. It is based on a two-year, field research-based extension of the author's original anchor study. The extension adds definition to the individual roles within the partnership and argues for the benefits resulting from current technology-driven learning environments.

From analyses of field notes, artifacts and interviews, three theoretical constructs are being presented: (a) To develop a collaborative partnership, the partners must be willing to support and maintain the relationship; (b) For a collaborative partnership to survive, evidence of interwoven curricula must be present; (c) Technology-driven learning adds definition to resource-based instruction.

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Introduction: Why this topic was selected

As a teacher for twenty-five years and a librarian for six of those years, I constantly saw the need to link the classroom curriculum with library resources. In my dissertation, I documented that linkage occurred through teacher-librarian partnerships. Technology played only a minor role in the partnerships observed, so no conclusive patterns were established. However, it was noted that technology could expand partnership possibilities (Jones, 1994).

Four years after my dissertation on teacher-librarian partnerships, I became concerned with nagging questions about "developing" partnerships. If partnerships occurred, how do they develop? Secondly, in today's technology-driven learning environment, how is the teacher-librarian partnership enacted?

Therefore, the central research question is: In situations where reading instruction is presented through a literature-based approach and library instruction is supported through a resource-based approach, how is the teacher-librarian partnership enacted in a technology-driven learning environment?

Review of the Anchor Study

Initial research that formed the anchor study for the current research was my dissertation, *The Teacher-Librarian Partnership in a Literature-Based Approach* (Jones, 1994). Eight theoretical constructs emerged from data analysis in that foundational study. 1. Partnership events occur in three ways: purposeful, springboard, and accidental. 2. Teacher-librarian partnerships support literature-based instruction. 3. Teacher-

librarian partnerships to survive must evidence support, maintenance, and reward. 4. Technology expands teacher-librarian partnership possibilities. 5. Contextual constraints exist which impede teacher-librarian partnerships. 6. Literature-based instruction has different meanings to different practitioners. 7. Literature-based instruction is distinguished from whole language by practitioners. 8. Literature-based approaches are limited by and confounded with skills approaches, district expectation, and eclectic methods.

The qualitative research for the anchor study focused upon classroom teachers and elementary school librarians from two schools. At both school sites, the librarian perceived herself as a teacher and was hired for a single-school, full-time librarian position. The schools' curriculum and teachers' lesson plans provided evidence of a literature-based approach. Each librarian and focus teachers were engaged in literature-based instruction.

The dissertation concludes with the statement: "Enactment of a teacher-librarian partnership facilitates communication and maintains consideration, cooperation, compromise and commitment for the partners....The image that comes to mind when describing an effective teacher-librarian partnership in a literature-based approach is one of enthusiastic teachers, librarians and students in partnership, learning together how to learn from literature."

Methodology

To the casual observer it looked like I had accepted the position of elementary school librarian. This position, however, afforded me an excellent research opportunity. I was able to get many answers about developing teacher-librarian partnerships and working within a technology-driven learning environment. During this time, I also fulfilled the requirements of the librarian contract.

As the participant researcher, I could enact my beliefs about collaborative teacher-librarian partnerships. However, as suggested by Punch (1994), I needed to provide the teachers with a nebulous explanation of my purpose at this school so as to avoid significantly influencing their responses. When teachers asked me why I came to this school, I would respond with something like "my area of interest is the teacher-librarian partnership, so I thought I would come check it out." Most people ignored my response or would say, "Oh."[Artifacts: 092598-102598] At the end of two years, some teachers still saw the term partnership to mean bringing in outside organizations or companies. [Artifact: 050500] As was apparent from the data, full disclosure about the research project would have failed to provide appropriate access to the phenomena of interest (Jorgensen, 1989).

Over the course of two years, field notes were taken, artifacts were collected and informal interviews were conducted. A grounded theory approach was applied to the analyses of data (Glazer & Strauss, 1967).

Data and Findings

Construct 1 – Willing Participation

In order to support teacher-librarian partnerships that are curriculum considerate, the librarian must be able to work with teachers within their needed time constraints.

Using full flexible scheduling for library services assisted the partnerships. Secondly, partnerships were maintained through scheduling efforts on the part of the librarian.

The school I had selected consisted of twelve separate buildings. The library was located in a direct line between the cafeteria and the teachers' lounge that housed the teachers' mailboxes. In this setting, every classroom teacher crossed the path of the library at least once each day.

In August 1998, the school district mandated full flexible scheduling across the district. At the first full faculty meeting, I invited teachers to sign up for the times they wanted to use the library. A flexible scheduling board was posted just two steps inside the entrance door to the library. When the door was propped open, a teacher could look at the board from outside the library and check the schedule without even entering the library. The flexible scheduling board displayed only the current week. On a clipboard located on the circulation desk opposite the flexible scheduling board were paper schedules for the next two weeks. Each day's schedule was divided into 50-minute segments as used by the special area classes: Gifted, Remedial, PE, Art, and Music.

I did not keep flexible scheduling papers for more than two weeks on the clipboard because when I tried to put out four or five weeks at a time on the clipboard, the teachers would sign up for all the weeks posted. That use of the sign-up process did not allow for any flexible scheduling. The teachers had, by default, reverted to fixed scheduling. [Artifact: 102698]

A hidden advantage to the flexible scheduling clipboard was that the school schedule for special events were listed. Teachers used the clipboard schedule as a reminder board and recognized the need for flexibility in scheduling.

Keller: Oh, we have off next Monday.

Jones: Yes. It's Martin Luther King Day.

Keller: Well, we'll do Monday stuff on Tuesday. That will work on the schedule. [Artifact:011000]

Teachers found ways to use the media center when other teachers had already signed up for all the posted times.

Katz: I have to bring my plan book with me. I can never remember what time I sign up for by the time I get back to class. Do we have off next Tuesday?

Jones: Yes, it's a test scoring day.

Katz: Well, how do I want to do this now? Can I come in just to check out [books] against (or at the same time as) Marano's class?

Jones: Yes, I think that'll work. Wait 10 minutes and come at 10:00 instead of 9:50. Then the students will be settled and involved in their lesson activity.

Katz: OK, we can do that. [Artifact: 031400]

During the first two months of the school year, I closely tracked the teachers' usage of the library. If they had not brought their classes to the library during the week and were not on the schedule for the following week, I would go to the teacher to see when the next library time needed to be scheduled.

During the 1998-99 school year, a morning playground duty provided me the opportunity to quickly schedule library times for teachers as they came to pick up their classes from the playground. I would walk with one teacher long enough to get a topic and ideas for presentation. Then I would double back and walk with another teacher to get that teacher's information [Artifact: 092398].

Most teachers learned the library scheduling system and by October 1998, teachers were taking the initiative to come to the library to sign-up. In 1999-2000, I talked with the new faculty individually to help them understand the flexible scheduling process. As a whole, the faculty supported one another's needs for library time.

Construct 2 - Weaving Curricula:

In order for teacher-librarian partnerships to survive, the members need the expertise of one another. Within the partnerships, classroom teachers need to provide instructional topics and the librarian needs to provide instructional resources. Together the classroom teacher and librarian designed the instruction for the curriculum. As an experienced teacher and university professor of language arts methods, I brought to the discussions a wide variety of techniques to implement strategies that match the Arizona curriculum standards.

The second construct is further supported by the change that has occurred within the professional library organization. In the last decade, the focus of their guiding document, *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (AASL & AECT, 1998), has moved from one emphasizing multiple roles for the librarian (instructional consultant, teacher and information specialist) to one role with embedded themes of collaboration, leadership and technology.

At the school in this research project, in order for the teachers to be aware that the librarian was a teacher, I began lessons with the students the first week of school. [Artifact: 082098] Most of the lessons were planned on the day the lesson was to be taught. I had teachers frequently share times in the library so that two groups could check out books. This was done for two reasons: first, nearly all 36 classes could be seen in a week and second, current perceptions of what library activities looked like in a collaborative partnership were being changed dramatically.

When teachers were deeply engaged in their own classroom concerns and situations, they did not take the lead role in collaborative planning. The teacher would respond, "Do what you like." [Artifact: 012599] That was not the goal for the partnerships; so I would have to probe with questions like: "What are you doing in your classroom in science or social studies that we can build upon?" or "What can we do to better prepare the students for the [Stanford 9] tests?" [Artifact: 031800] Using probing questions into their curriculum, I was able to get a better understanding of how they were presenting the material and what part of the topic to emphasize during my instructional time.

Preparation to teaching a lesson is vital for collaboration to exist. The length of the preparation time varies as these examples demonstrate. "Think of her and she appears," said Ms. Lynn Castiglione. She was seated in her classroom during the morning recess talking with her student-teacher and Mrs. Reynolds, her neighboring teacher. Lynn had just commented about needing a plan for library time in the afternoon. I knew that it was a.m. recess for her grade level so I thought I would try to catch her in her room so we could make that plan and, too, so I could observe evidence of their classroom lives. We began with the usual: what's the topic?

Castiglione: We're still doing dinosaurs.

Jones: I thought maybe.

Castiglione: You know we didn't do that writing project while the book fair was going on.
Jones: Right
Castiglione: So maybe we should do it now. (She picked up the picture frame page she had run off for the students to draw a picture of a dinosaur and a lined writing page.) We could write about the dinosaur.
Jones: OK. Didn't their fact paper have boxes on it?
Castiglione: Yes, what it eats, how it moves...
Jones: OK. We could write one sentence from each box into a paragraph.
Reynolds: You need to write a topic sentence.
Castiglione: (to Jones) You could have them write that sentence.
Jones: Do you want: My dinosaur is ____.
Reynolds: It should have the time or place in the sentence.
Jones: Like?
Reynolds: During the Jurassic Period, the _____ lived in South America.
Castiglione: Right, they'd have those facts.
Jones: OK, we could do that pattern sentence for the opening for all of them. Then they could write one sentence per box. That would take about 20 minutes.
Reynolds: I'd like to see that.
Jones: Well, 20 minutes is when I stop the demonstration portion of the lesson and the students work on their own.
Castiglione: I think we can do it.
Jones: Let's try. You're going to bring the paper and pencils?
Castiglione: Yeah, and their red folders.
Jones: See you this afternoon and we'll go for it. [Artifact: 032800]

The afternoon lesson went just as planned. The students came in, checked in their books, took a seat at the tables, got out their writing papers, I demonstrated a topic sentence on the board. They copied the pattern sentence onto their paper. I reminded them to use an indentation to begin the paragraph and a capital letter to start the sentence. I had the students write the sentence in three segments: first the during-phrase, second the name of their dinosaur and finally the place information. Some students finished the sentence and continued to write sentences from the boxes (they were instructed to do so individually), while others just finished their topic sentence. Students spent about 45 minutes writing.

The partnership with Mrs. Reynolds' class later that week looked very different. At a faculty meeting before school, we sat next to one another. As the speaker began with introductions, I wrote on my agenda paper the two words "mystery books." She nodded an affirmative. That was it! The joint planning for this lesson was built upon the prior lessons used during the month's theme. Mrs. Reynolds' library lessons had set up a pattern of reminding students of the last library class, reading a new story, discussing connections to students' prior knowledge, reminding students to take Accelerated Reader tests and checking out more mystery books. So the nod of her head was taken to mean that the established pattern was to be followed. [Artifact: 033000]

Unexpected results from a collaborative partnership occurred when interwoven curricula guided individualized instruction. An example of this happened when Mrs. Galler's class had been working on US Presidents for some time. One day a student

came into the library and said that he was looking for information on Ursala Grace. I was assisting another class with informational research about animals; they were using the internet. So I quickly guided this young man to an encyclopedia to look for the name. After about five minutes he was back to get my attention. He hadn't found the person and wanted to know if I had another source. I did, I gave him the biographical dictionary. Again he didn't find the name and was back to get my attention. As I was walking him to the computers for an internet on-line search for this person's name, I realized that the student didn't want Ursala Grace. The student was studying US Presidents. I asked him, "Is your person a president?" When he replied in the affirmative, I guided him to information on US President Ulysses S. Grant. [Artifact: 040700] Through collaborative planning, I had connected the topic of study and this student's reading level in order to provide him with the correct research resource.

Construct 3 – Adding Definition:

In order for teacher-librarian partnerships to function in today's resource-based environment, technology must be used with the same ease as those resources of paper products. When topical information is collected for a teacher, all sources including technology need to be researched. The librarian is expected to be knowledgeable in all areas and to assist all patrons in using all resources including technology.

In the school library, there are twelve computer work-stations for the students and two circulation/work stations for the librarian. The card catalog is electronic; there is an LCD projector and smart board available for instructional use; TV, VCR, filmstrip and recorders are still a part of the media available within the library. Two labs are located in two separate rooms about fifty yards away. The computer lab contains thirty computers with big screen, instructional-projection. The multi-media lab includes twelve stand-alone computers, a TV/VCR player, a laser disk player and movie making capabilities.

With the split locations for housing the technology equipment, the teachers recognized the need to expand their personal knowledge in the capabilities of the programs currently installed on the computers in the library and labs. The teachers established their own within-house professional development materials that are shared at voluntary meetings called "Tech Tuesday". [Artifact: 082300] The librarian is one of the faculty presenters for the computer programs.

In the library on a daily basis, students come during their free time to work on computer programs. Students with instruction-driven assignments have priority over students working on personal choice materials. [Artifact: 020300] Students are also given class time to work on assignments. [Artifact: 030699]

A major multi-media project during the 1999-2000 school year was "Bellair Makes History Come Alive." This project began with collaborative planning.

> It was lunchtime for fifth grade and Denise Kenney stopped in to talk-through an idea she had.
>
> Kenney: We want to do some biographies in depth and then share them with second grade since they do biographies, too.
>
> Jones: OK, do you have any people in mind? Do you know how you want to present them?
>
> Kenney: I think we want to do Jackie Robinson, like I did last year, and then I need to get some [names for biographies] from Lynn (a second grade teacher).

We could do it together. I could show the video clips (for the biographical characters). You know, the new ones (VCR tapes by Living Histories).
Jones: We can do that.
Kenney: Wait, this could be really cool if we did the research together (fifth grade and second grade students). We could start the lesson in here and explain to them how we could group them into research teams. Then we could pull all the materials on the people (biographical characters). The students could even dress like the characters and put on a parent presentation. I wonder if Maggie (a commercial computer and television service vendor) would help us?
Jones: This sounds great. The students would love it. Let's sign up for the times you need.
Kenney: (Looking at the board she writes down all the open times on Thursday and Friday that week.) I'll check with Lynn and email you with what we want.
Jones: OK, this will be great! [Artifact: 100599]

The project continued with initial searches on the biographical characters completed by the librarian so books would be ready for the first group visit. Additional character searches were completed by the students. Then students began reading and taking notes for interview questions. Students developed character information into games, book posters, timelines and puppets. Information was retrieved from books, magazines, filmstrips, videos, internet searches and taped public broadcast programs. What appeared to be the final product was a public program with students presenting the biographical information in period clothing. Later in April, the students turned their video recordings of their own learning times and presentation into a digital movie.

Two typical technology projects involve the internet. In the first project, students learn to take materials from the internet and paste them into a word-processing program. Plagiarism is a major lesson that follows initial instruction on how-to cut and paste. In the second technology project, students learn how to search for internet sites. Advertisement and appropriateness of sites are lessons that follow initial instruction on searching techniques.

Technology continues to be used in lessons in ways that enhance learning activities. The librarian is expected to know how to use the variety of technologies and assist patrons with them.

Conclusion

The three unifying themes of the vision of library media programs as described in *Information Power: Building Partnerships for Learning* (AASL, & AECT, 1998) are collaboration, leadership, and technology. This research supports that document and adds evidence to the body of knowledge that library media centers are dynamic, student-centered places for learning.

Teachers and librarians form partnerships to meet mutual needs. For the partnership to become collaborative, the needs of the individuals must be supported and maintained by the members. An interwoven curriculum allows for all content topics to be presented within a multimedia approach. Finally, technology-driven learning adds definition to the term resource-based approach. All media and materials that are a part of the holdings of the library collection are readily available to all patrons. Students are

particularly skilled in computer-based technologies and are learning to use them within a resource-based approach for instruction.

This research answered my initial questions of how partnerships are formed and how technology-based learning is enacted in a resource-based environment. Effective collaborative teacher-librarian partnerships involve enthusiastic teachers and librarians along with students learning together and learning to learn through a variety of resources.

Recommendations for Future Research

While the size of the holdings of the library collection does not limit the partnerships, how do the quantity and quality of the materials within the categories to be investigated, i.e. dinosaurs, animals, presidents, states, impact collaborative partnerships?

Students in schools with appropriate and sufficient library collections and qualified library personnel tend to perform better on standardized tests (Manzo, 2000). How do collaborative partnerships impact student test scores?

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